

## BEST OF 2018

What I'm noticing these days is the quality of attention that is invited (or demanded) by any given performance. Other than that very subjective standard, this list is, of course, limited by what I've actually been able to see this year.

### **Ailey's 60th Knocks It Out of the Park**

The company has stretched in many directions under Robert Battle while still preserving its heritage. During this 60th-anniversary season, they struck it rich with world premieres from Rennie Harris and Jessica Lang and a company premiere of Wayne McGregor. Ronald K. Brown made his seventh luscious ballet for the company, and the Robert Battle evening showed what how powerful Battle is as a choreographer—and witty too.

Rennie Harris' *Lazarus* rises from utter despair to infectious joy. Hints of lynchings are rendered subtly, eliciting feelings that linger. The vocabulary seems to draw from a wide range of black vernacular—I thought I saw more gumboot than hip hop.



*Lazarus* by Rennie Harris, Daniel Harder in center, photo Paul Kolnik

In Jessica Lange's *EN*, a circle is an eclipse, a moon, a pendulum, a gathering point, and a symbol of life cycles. Jacob Ciupinsky's percussive score has unexpected spare moments that allow reflection, time for breathing and listening amidst the symphonic choreography.



Jessica Lang's *EN*, photo Paul Kolnik

received a well deserved *Dance Magazine* Award.)



Parisa Khobdeh and Michael Trusnovec in Taylor's *Eventide*, ph Paul B. Goode

**Taylor Stanley**, who is great in everything, ran away with Kyle Abraham's *Runaway*, his spine swerving between upright ballet positions and the pelvic swagger of hip hop.

As Isadora Duncan, **Sara Mearns** danced with dignity, arms floating, body swirling. Staged by Isadora authority Lori Belilove, this version appeared on Paul Taylor's American Modern Dance as well as in *Fall for Dance*. Even if Isadora was earthly, Mearns was heavenly.

**Rakeem Hardy** was transfixing as the man climbing a mountain in *(C)arbon* by Andrea Miller and Gallim, at the Met Breuer. Totally exposed, he committed to every ounce of the trembling, staggering choreography.



Caitlin Scranton as Ursula, photo Andrew Jordan

**Caitlin Scranton**, luminous, mysterious... austerious, if you will, as Ursula in an excerpt of Christopher Williams' *Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins* at Cathy Weis Project's *Sundays on Broadway*. Her lethal-looking claws hovered near her tender, exposed flesh.

**Megan Wright** of the Stephen Petronio Dance Company, in Steve Paxton's *Goldberg Variations* (1986–92) at MoMA's Judson series. Sudden, quirky dynamics emanating from the center of the body. She applied whiteface, mimicking a mime in the sense of invisible forces pulling and

pushing her, surprising her. She was led by the force of her body reacting to Glenn Gould's recording of Bach.



Megan Wright in Paxton's *Goldberg Variations*, photo Paula Court